



I would like to tell you an amusing, if gruesome, story about my mother-in-law's cat, which we inherited. I would like to have something uplifting and positive to say after the attacks at the Boston Marathon. I would like to tell you about how the scores of my daughter's volleyball games at the Y are functionally equivalent to a count of successful serves. These things are not entirely relevant, but they have the advantage of not being Ubaldo Jimenez' pitching performance.

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The B-List: 4/16

Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

Wednesday, April 17 2013 1:06 PM - Last Updated Wednesday, April 17 2013 1:26 PM

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Written by {ga=stevebuffum}

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W: Doubront (1-0) L: U. Jimenez (0-2)

Our thoughts and prayers go to those families affected by the bombs in Boston.

0) Administrative Notes

Today's column will be a little shorter than usual because of several factors. My mother-in-law's cat, which is declawed, tried to play the "Whose Territory Is The Bed?" game with one of my cats, which is not declawed, and lost. It looked to have lost in spectacular fashion, as I went to get something from my dresser and saw a three-foot arc of blood on the wall. It turns out she just got scratched on the tail and waved it vigorously and she'll be fine, but that cut (so to speak) into my prep time. I'm kind of grateful that my wife and daughter did not return home to find this.

The other factors have to do with the game itself: I find the prospect of railing about Jimenez' start somewhat unpalatable, and the rest of the game was really very nondescript.

1) A Treatise on Failure

No one likes to fail. Some embrace it more than others, but in my understanding of human psychology, we are at some level hard-wired to consider failing to be a negative experience to be avoided. Some use failure as a signal to quit trying to do the thing we've failed at, and others use it as motivation to develop whatever skill it is we lack, whether it be hunting gazelles or building a house or writing a sonata or invading Russia in the winter. It seems like a given that a mentally-healthy individual does not want to fail, though.

My spelling bee career was cut short by the word "parliament;" I like to tell people I had to stop playing baseball because a doctor found a bone cyst in my femur, but in reality, in my last season of Little League it became clear that mature pitchers were able to exploit my tendency to swing at any pitch thrown within the same area code as the batter's box. I got a Master's Degree because I lacked the discipline to get a Ph. D. I could not be a professional athlete because, unlike Nietzsche, that which did not kill me made me seek other things I turned out to be better at.

I don't know what there is to say that would pass for Constructive Analysis with respect to Ubaldo Jimenez' performance last night. His first inning was very good, with three ground ball outs in fifteen pitches. His second inning was very bad, yielding seven earned runs on two hits. Sure, the big blow was actually yielded by Cody Allen, but the fact is, Jimenez walked five guys

in the inning and that's really simply terrible.

It was pointed out by @MonteColorman on Twitter that the umpire, Laz Diaz, was notorious for calling a tight strike zone in his career, and I will say that to the untrained eye, I would have called fewer balls than Diaz did. Jimenez may have gotten squeezed a bit. He also threw a bunch of pitches out the strike zone by anyone's estimation. He had good velocity, and his pitches seemed to have some bite, but when you walk five guys in one inning ... well ... that is Simple Fail.

As Brian McPeck pointed out on Twitter last night as well, it's harder to watch Jimenez fail because he seems like a genuinely good guy who is trying everything he can think of to succeed. There's not a lack of effort or desire or professionalism. He has a complex delivery and last night had good stuff, and last night, at least, he failed. This is not Shawn Kemp getting fat. This is just ... bad. So in lieu of Constructive Analysis, it would be nice if I could come up with some amusing rant or something here. And largely in synch with Brian's observation, I can't do that either. I hope Jimenez recovers and has a desperately average season.

2) Fire? What fire?

Cody Allen's sixth pitch was a 3-2 offering to Mike Napoli, who is a pretty good hitter. I coveted him when he was with the Angels and Mike Scioscia obviously hated catchers who could hit better than he did. I enjoyed watching him with Texas. The man can hit, and he cleared the bases with a three-run double to put the finishing touches on Jimenez' night. In retrospect, he could have struck out there and the Tribe would still have lost, but hey.

And then Allen declared that enough was enough.

For three innings, Allen held the BoSox scoreless by giving up three more singles and a walk while striking out SIX, including NINE swings and misses. Having thrown 50+ pitches, Allen departed for Nick Hagadone, who threw 38 pitches of his own, none of which was recorded as a hit by the Sox. Hagadone did walk two, but he struck out 3 and retains his clean sheet for the season. Rich Hill, being faced with the prospect of no longer being as special (Hagadone is left-handed), threw one inning with 2 Ks and a walk. Finally, Brian Shaw finished off the final inning and a third by striking out Dustin Pedroia, Napoli, Will Middlebrooks, and Mike Carp ...

ALL SWINGING. Shaw induced SEVEN swings and misses.

In all, the Cleveland bullpen pitched 7 1/3 innings, gave up 4 hits and 4 walks, and struck out FIFTEEN RED SOX.

Here's the thing: asked to name our top three relievers before this game, I would not have named ONE of these men (Pestano, Smiff, Perez). I still don't believe in Rich Hill and Cody Allen gives me diverticulitis, but it doesn't appear as if the bullpen will be the single most important factor if this team finishes with a losing record.

3) Meet the new leadoff man, same as the old leadoff man

Whereas Pete Townshend meant his lyric to be a scathing indictment, in this case being the same as Mike Bourn thus far is quite the good thing indeed. As pointed out the last time he did it, it's a fine thing to have Drew Stubbs lead off against a left-handed starter. Stubbs simply isn't a good choice against righties, but given the chance to face Felix Doubront and a couple of relievers I couldn't identify with an Internet search and a Where's Waldo anthology, Stubbs reached base three times in five trips to the plate with a pair of walks and a ninth-inning single.

4) Ducks on the pond!

The Indians left nine men on base. Again. They scored their two runs without a hit (one scored on a wild pitch, the other on a sac fly). Cleveland went 1-for-5 with a runner in scoring position, and the one hit simply advanced runners on first and second to second and third.

5) Welcome back!

Bob Phelps marked his triumphant return to the club by grounding out to the pitcher in a pinch-hit appearance. This means that we now have TWO left-handed hitting second basemen capable of squelching a rally with a well-timed ground ball to an infielder.

6) Welcome some percentage of the way back!

Carlos Santana returned to the lineup. In four trips to the plate he struck out twice and did not strike out twice. His OBP is now a paltry .514. His SLG of .767 is dwarfed by that of Asdrubal Cabrera, Mike Brantley, and Lonnie Chisenhall combined (.891).

7) Wait, what was that?

Slugging percentages from last night's game:

Stubbs: .263
Cabrera: .277
Brantley: .308
Chisenhall: .306
Raburn: .350

Were this 1908, these percentages would still be low.

8) Small Victories

The Indians did not make an error!

(They did throw two wild pitches, which is apparently not the same.)